

March 22, 2015

Mr. Briel,

The purpose of this message is to voice my support for surgical technologists. I am an orthopaedic surgeon here in Lincoln. I work with surgical technologists on a daily basis. Many people are unaware of their vital role in surgical procedures. There is no way that surgery can be safe and successful without them. I cannot emphasize enough their importance in health care.

I have a surgical team consisting of both a physician assistant and a surgical technologist. Both have worked for me for over 6 years. I will try to explain and define their roles. I have been blessed to have such great quality people working for me, assisting me both in the clinic and in the operating room.

Mr. Steve Hartman is a surgical technologist who is present for essentially 100% of my surgical cases. He has assisted me on thousands of cases through the years. My PA is present for a good majority of cases but not all the smaller cases. When she is not present in surgery, she is taking care of other clinical responsibilities. Mr. Hartman's role previously had been helping me position the patient, drape, hold the extremity, retract tissue, and suture incisions. Obviously, he has not been able to perform any skin closures since this whole debacle went down last fall. I really feel this is extremely unfortunate. Mr. Hartman is an excellent surgical technologist who has tremendous ability in suturing incisions. I will honestly say that he can suture as well as any surgeon.

I can also honestly say that there was never anything done ulterior or unethical. There was never any billing fees submitted for his assistance. He never provided any assistance away from my complete supervision. Most importantly, there was never any harm rendered to patients by his wound closures. As I mentioned, his ability to close and suture incisions is as good as any surgeon. I would let him close an incision on me or on any of my family members.

I sure hope this matter can be resolved. This issue has not only influenced our efficiency but has affected many surgeons throughout our city and state. I think it is a shame that it has become a battle of lobbyists fighting for their position and turf. If it is a matter of surgical technologists needing "licensure" to be able to suture and close incisions, let's get it done. I strongly feel this needs a quick resolution.

Sincerely,

David J. Clare, M.D.